

Redeemed and Adopted
(Sanctity of Life Sunday, 2025)
1.26.25

Please turn in your Bibles to the Book of Galatians, chapter 3.

Today is the Sunday in January that we set aside to recognize and celebrate the sanctity of life. It's a time to remember the gift of life, given by our Creator. And also to draw attention to the greatest atrocity of our lifetime – and that is, abortion.

And at the beginning I want to recommend an excellent online resource. Our own Mitchell Ward has created a brief, 30-minute YouTube instructional video that can help the everyday Christian know the biblical stance on abortion, as well as to be able to engage with the culture, and to answer common questions and arguments. (I will provide the link to these resources in my sermon notes that we will post online.)

- Video Link: <https://youtu.be/6jcdAm4RG8s>
- Link to the simplified notes:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Bq04e4PpwwkKpGIVaayN78Gi64VRdPIEiazQOnhPzPQ/edit?usp=sharing>

Since Roe v Wade in 1973, more than 63 million unborn children have been murdered in the womb. And even though Roe v. Wade was overturned and sent back to the states in 2022, the actual number of abortions increased last year, partly due to the ease of doctors prescribing the abortion pill over the phone and internet through telehealth.

63 million babies, dead. By comparison, in all of WW2, we lost 405K American lives. That's not even 1 percent of the number of lives taken in abortion.

Now, I could spend the morning shocking you with statistics, but instead, I'm going to take a different route. I know it's always dangerous to assume anything. But for today, I want to assume that as mature believers, you know that God forms children in their mother's womb (Psalm 139). That God is the author of life and children are a blessing from the Lord (Psalm 127). Which means, when we deliberately take the life of an unborn child, that is murder.

I also want to assume that, as Christians, you know we should stand against such evil. We should pray for the laws in our nation to change. We should promote a culture of life and adoption in our churches, giving homes to children who need them. For those who bear the scars of abortion, we should love them

and point them to Jesus, who can forgive all sin and heal all wounds. And we should raise our children to value life, and to use our lives to worship the One who gave His life for us.

I want to assume those things are clear, so that our focus today can be a little different. Instead of only pointing to the problem, I want to consider one of the solutions. Now, we know when it comes to something like abortion, the only real solution is hearts that are transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But there are practical ways Christians can respond – not only in standing against abortion, but in promoting adoption. And that’s where I want to spend our time today, in celebrating adoption: both physical adoption and how it brings joy to families, but more than that, our spiritual adoption into the family of God through faith in Jesus.

With that, let’s read Gal. 3:29 – 4:7, then we’ll pray...

Galatians 3:29 – 4:7

[3:29] And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. [4:1] I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, [2] but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

[3] In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. [4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

[6] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (ESV)

(PRAY)

PROP: As Christ has welcomed me into His family, I can open my family to those in need.

Our Story

Angela and I have been married for 31 years. We have two wonderful children, Chloe who is 16 and Noah is 11 – both of whom are adopted. We obviously got a late start in life having kids. There’s a reason for that. And it’s part of our testimony. Both of our adoption stories are precious to us, but I’ll share just one of them today.

For the first few years of our marriage, people would ask Angela and I, when are you going to have children? We would jokingly say, "We're on the 5-year plan. Whenever we're asked, it's always 5 years from now." I look back on that now and cringe.

Because early on, I ashamed to say, we didn't see children as a blessing, but as a burden. We both worked full-time. We enjoyed being able to travel when we wanted to. Working and traveling are not bad. But for us, our family planning was rooted in selfishness, and a man-centered theology. We were saved, but our understanding of marriage and family were immature at best.

Then the gospel started working on us in this area. We began to see marriage – not as something we owned and could do as we please – but as a gift from God, a gift for us to steward.

We moved from GA to MN. At the time, we still didn't have any children. The years went on. Angela was an OBGYN nurse, so she knew well how both our biological clocks were ticking. We tried to get pregnant, but nothing happened. A couple more years went by. Still nothing happened. We went to the doctors and had tests done, but no one could tell us why we were not conceiving. We knew God must have other plans. So, we began praying about having children through adoption.

And in God's timing, after only 2 weeks of praying, we found out that an adult daughter of one of the families in the church, already a single mother living with her parents, was unexpectedly pregnant. Her name was Anne-Marie.

We took time to love on her and minister the gospel to her. Our first priority was to care for her. We could not imagine all that she was going through. At the same time, in the back of my mind, I began to wonder "Is this also God's timing of answering our prayer for adoption? Is Anne-Marie even considering that? If so, how would that work, both the adoptive parents and the birth parent attending the same church?" We didn't have all the answers, but we knew that God was doing something good.

I had coffee with the Anne-Marie's dad. I said to him, "Please don't be offended by my question. But with your daughter's pregnancy, I was wondering – is she considering adoption?" He said, "Funny you should ask - Yes, she is." I said, "Please don't tell her it's me asking, because I don't want her to feel any pressure, especially from the 'pastor of the church'. But if it would make a difference, would you be willing to tell her that there is a Christian couple you know of that are looking to adopt."

He agreed. And the months went by. Angela and I were careful not to let our hearts become too attached in a situation where there were no guarantees. We would get the occasional report from the grandparents – one week the mother was still considering adoption. The next week she was making a list of baby names. We held it all loosely, and continued to pray for God’s will to be done.

Anne-Marie finally approached her parents and said, “Look, I need to know who this couple is. It’s going to make the difference in my decision.” They said, “It’s Scott and Angela.” She said, “Yes, I want to do this.” Angela and I were invited to meet in their home. We talked together. We cried together. We prayed together. And we all knew this was something God was doing.

After church service one Sunday, we had a member meeting. One of the other pastors stood up and told the church what was happening. Angela and I stood on one side – Anne-Marie and her family stood on the other side. He said, “Church we are about to see an illustration of the gospel play out in our church.” After he told them about the adoption, the ladies of the church spontaneously stood up, made two lines – one in front of Angela, and the other line in front of the birth-mother – loving on them and praying for them both.

A couple of months later, late one evening, we got the call. Anne-Marie was going into labor. We made our way to the hospital. Soon our baby girl, Chloe Grace, arrived. Angela even got to cut the cord. When they were discharged from the hospital, Ann-Marie walked into our home, carrying Chloe, along with some family members. We all knelt down in our living room. Ann-Marie placed Chloe in my wife’s arms. Again, we wept together and prayed together.

At the time, Chloe was surrounded in our church with her biological grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. So the reality was, we not only adopted Chloe. Angela and I were adopted into their family as well.

Then, five years later, when we found out God was going to bless us in adopting a baby boy, we went to Chloe’s biological family and asked them, can Noah call you his grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins as well? They all joyfully said yes.

Only God could put together all of those pieces and work out all those details for His glory!

Our story is just one of the many beautiful testimonies of adoption. There are other families in this church who know the joy of adoption first-hand. I share our adoption story with you today for a few reasons...

- 1) To remind us that life is precious, and children are a gift from God.

- 2) To encourage you to consider adoption, that if there is room in your home, there is a child who needs a family.
- 3) And ultimately, I share it because I believe God wants us to see that physical adoption is a reflection and illustration of the spiritual adoption we have been given through faith in Christ.

1 Peter 2:10 says, “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

All of us were once orphans and outcasts. Our sin had separated us from God. But by God’s mercy, through faith in Jesus, we were redeemed and adopted by God Himself. Now, all who are in Christ are called sons and daughters of God.

It’s this adoption that our text in Galatians is pointing to. The Apostle Paul has the daunting task of addressing at least three major cultures in his epistles: the **Jews, the Greeks and the Romans**. And when it came to rites of passage, transitioning a child into adulthood, each of these cultures did it a little differently. For instance:

A) **Jews** – (Bar Mitzvah) 12 years old – became a “son of the Law”

B) **Greeks** – (Apatouria) 18 years old – the young man transitions from the care of father to care of the State

C) **Romans** – the time and age of this rite of passage was determined by their father, but it was celebrated on March 17th each year. This was the time the child was formally adopted as a son, and recognized as an heir. Before that, the child held the same status as a slave – he was protected, provided for, yet he had no inheritance and no family status. Only when his father decided that the boy was ready to be recognized as being mature enough would His childhood toga be replaced with a toga of manhood, and his status as a rightful heir of his father would be secure.

This Roman ritual is what Paul was referring to in our text in 4:1-2...

[1] I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, [2] but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

How ironic. The Jews grew their boys into sons of the Law. Greeks grew their boys into sons of the State. But the Romans grew their boys into sons and heirs. And then v. 3 connects us to this picture...

[3] In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

Each of us, we were all slaves of our own sin, imprisoned by the Law, under its guardianship. And by no merit of our own, God sent Jesus to redeem us.

[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Paul draws a distinction here between being “**redeemed**” and being “**adopted**”. To redeem means to “buy out of slavery”. But to set someone free without helping them see where they belong would just be trading one kind of bondage for another.

There’s a term used in the prison system called being “**institutionalized**”. This happens when a person has been behind bars so long that life inside a prison is all they know. And when this person is released from prison, they find themselves thrust into a world where they cannot function and have no idea how to survive. Many commit crimes simply to be put back into the prison, back into the world they understand.

In much the same way, we can be set free from sin, we can be delivered from addictions, we can be rescued out of desperate circumstances, **but freedom without a new identity is not true freedom**. To truly be free means to be freed FROM something, and to be freed INTO something else.

So, when we trust in Jesus, we are redeemed. But through faith in Christ, we are not only redeemed, not only freed from sin. We are also given a new identity. We are adopted into His family, as sons and daughters of God. We are His children. And God is our Father.

Now the Jews knew God as the Source of creation and the Giver of the law. But Jesus knew God as the intimate, personal Father. And taught His disciples the same, in the way He taught and prayed, spoke of God as His Father. This was revolutionary.

It’s true that the Jews referred to God as the “Father” of their nation, “Father” of the universe, “Father” as creator. But none of these terms were meant to

communicate any relationship of intimacy. This idea of God being called “Abba Father” was not only strange to the Jews, but blasphemous. To consider God as your Father was to bring the Holy Creator of all down to a level that was considered demeaning and common.

But Jesus led in a completely different way. Every one of His prayers – except one – started with Jesus referring to God as “Abba”, or Father. And Jesus came to earth and fulfilled His mission so that WE could also call God FATHER.

Look again at these verses from our text:

[4:4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman” (in human flesh and bone),

-He was “***born under the law***”, (being tempted by the same things that we are tempted with, and under the same expectations to fulfill the law).

-And why did He come? (v. 5) “***to redeem those who were under the law***” (that is, all of God’s people who were hopelessly lost and imprisoned by our own sin, condemned by the law),

-“***so that we might receive adoption as sons***”

- not only that we may be spared the punishment of breaking the law,
- not only to fulfill the law on our behalf,
- not only to receive the full measure of God’s wrath for us,

BUT also to secure our identities as adopted sons and daughters of God!

Stop for a moment and meditate on that amazing reality. To go from God’s mortal enemy to God’s beloved son or daughter is simply indescribable. “Once your enemy, now seated at your table, Jesus thank you.”

Romans 8:15 - For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

You may be here today, and your life may not have seemed very ordered or purposeful. But know this – there is a loving God who has led you to where you are right now. A loving, sovereign Heavenly Father who rescued you, who has protected you, and who has directed your life to bring you right where you are.

We often tell our kids they were “twice loved” – by birth-parents and by adopted parents. In natural adoption, there is a choosing. Our kids didn’t choose us. We chose them.

Ephesians 1:5 - *He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...*

For those who have turned from their sin and trusted in Christ, it is because God predestined you – He chose you to be adopted as His own. He loves you so much He chose you before you ever knew Him. It doesn’t matter if your earthly parents got it right or got it wrong. It doesn’t matter what happened before. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done. If you’ve placed your faith in Christ, the blood of Jesus covers every sin you have ever committed or ever will commit. You are His. You are adopted into the family of God. Forever.

And verse 6 in our text says...

[6] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father! [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Verse 6 says “sons” plural. Verse 7, it becomes singular, “son”. Paul goes from a broad truth that applies to many, and then he makes it personal and intimate. God is Father over all, but more specifically, if you are in Christ, God is Your Father, your Abba.

Those who have trusted in Jesus, those who have been transformed by the Gospel, you have been given the incredible, intimate relationship to have the God of the universe call you “son” and “daughter”. And just like earthly parents pass down what they own to their children, as sons and daughters of God, you are also heirs of your Heavenly Father’s estate. And what does He own? He owns everything!

“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof!” (Ps. 24) That’s why Jesus says in the beatitudes that “the meek will...inherit the earth” (Matt. 5).

All who are in Christ are no longer slaves to sin, but sons and daughters of God. And as sons and daughters, we will inherit all the goodness and fullness of the Kingdom of God.

To know God as your “Father” changes everything. It means...

-You are not abandoned, but you are embraced and loved.

-You have no more need for a “survival” mentality, keeping all your faults a secret, but now you can live in the light, open and vulnerable with God and others.

-We have no more excuses to be “self-sufficient”, but because God is our Father, we can be completely dependent on Him.

-We are no longer striving for affirmation or identity by our works, but we are being accepted and adopted by faith in the completed work of Jesus on the cross.

-We don't have to feel condemned, because we know we are forgiven.

And when we realize that we, who were once orphans, are now adopted by God, it means no longer living life focused on self or just living for our own comforts. It means you and I see our lives, not as something we own, but as a gift to steward.

Remember: ***As Christ has welcomed me into His family, I can open my family to those in need.*** Our families and our homes are not our own, but they are places where God wants to display the hospitality of the gospel, inviting unsaved neighbors over for a meal, and to use as a gathering place for others who need encouragement, and yes...to consider that empty chair at your dining room table as one that could be filled by adopting a child.

In the cultural debate of choosing life, Christians should not be known only for what we are against. Not only pointing at the problem, but we should be offering the solution. Not just standing against abortion, but also promoting foster care and adoption – starting with our own families. And it also means helping to support other families who adopt with our prayers and our resources.

With our spiritual adoption in Christ as our anchor, let me take a moment and address some concerns or reasons families hesitate in adopting a child:

- 1) **Adoption is only for those who have fertility problems.** Plenty of “fertile” couples adopt, for the simple reason there are children who need good homes. Right now, there are over 4,000 children in Maryland alone that need adoptive families or foster families immediately.
- 2) **Adoption is too expensive.** Yes, adoption can be expensive. But there are lots of ways to get help. Crowd funding (which is what Angela and I did). Grants. Loans. Our church's benevolence fund. If you're considering adoption, but finances are the problem, come talk to me and I can help

point you to some helpful resources. And if you want to contribute to an adoption fund that would benefit families from our church, come talk to me as well.

- 3) **I'm not sure I would love an adopted child the same as a biological one.** While I don't have any biological children to compare, I can tell you there is absolutely no difference. Those of you with biological children probably had similar questions before your child was born. But all that changed when you held them. The same applies with adopted children. I didn't realize how much I would love my kids. But when I held them in my arms, there was no doubt.
- 4) **I'm concerned that an adopted child will not get along with the children I already have.** This can be a concern for those who are thinking about adopting a child older than children in your home. But it's not impossible. After all, do your children now get along perfectly with each other? No. Then why would we expect perfection from an adopted child. If God is calling you to adopt, He will give you the grace to walk it out.

Conclusion

I close with this: I said earlier that every one of Jesus' prayers started with Him referring to God as Father – except one. The one exception is His prayer on the cross.

As Jesus was receiving the terrifying, unimaginable full measure of the wrath of God stored up for the sins of His people. Jesus cried, "**My God, My God**, why have you forsaken me?"

This was the only prayer when Jesus did not refer to God as "Father". He cried out as one who was condemned, one who was separated from God, one who had been cut off from the presence of God and abandoned. In that moment, Jesus truly had been forsaken – for us. In that moment, Jesus did not call God "Father" because He experienced, for the first time, the full wrath of the Just and Holy God.

Jesus was forsaken so that we would be forgiven.
Jesus was abandoned so that we would be adopted.

Celebrate that now, by living a life of grateful worship to God, *and* by showing Christ-like hospitality in opening our homes and our families to those who need us most.

(Let's Pray)